

# Rome pilgrimage begins with prayer at seminary

ROME - At the start of a weeklong pilgrimage to Rome June 26, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien encouraged more than 100 Catholics from the Archdiocese of Baltimore and beyond to use the occasion as a time to draw closer to God.

"We come to touch a holy place and our instincts tell us the Lord is here," said Archbishop O'Brien, speaking inside the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the Pontifical North American College in the Eternal City - the same seminary he once led as rector in the early 1990s.

"Let's make this a true pilgrimage," he said.

The archbishop reminded worshippers that people have historically made pilgrimages out of a sense of piety, to do penance and to offer prayers of petition and thanksgiving.

"We follow in the holy footsteps of people who went before us," he said, noting that after the Holy Sepulcher in the Holy Land, Rome has been the most visited pilgrimage site in the world.

The pilgrimage of the Baltimore group was a prelude to the June 29 conferral of the pallium on Archbishop O'Brien by Pope Benedict XVI. The woolen vestment signifies the archbishop's office as a metropolitan archbishop.

In his homily, Baltimore's 15th archbishop said he hopes the pilgrimage will give participants the grace to live up to the "lofty teaches of Christ" on the Sermon of the Mount to love God and one another, feed the poor and care for the sick.

A large, modern mosaic of the Blessed Virgin Mary served as the backdrop for the opening Mass, which was concelebrated by Cardinal William H. Keeler; Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar; Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar; Bishop Denis J. Madden, urban vicar; and some 25 priests.

Before the liturgy began, Archbishop O'Brien greeted the pilgrims personally as they crossed a seminary entranceway inscribed in marble with the college's motto, "Firmum est cor meum", Steadfast is my heart.

Ginny Dausen, youth minister at St. Mary in Annapolis called the gesture very touching. She wanted to be present for the pilgrimage to represent the youth of the archdiocese.

"I'm here to thank God for the gift of our archbishop," she said. I want to show that as a youth minister and as a Catholic, I support him.

During an evening welcome dinner, Baltimore City Council woman Agnes Welch, presented several official proclamations from Charm City leaders honoring the archbishop for receiving the pallium. The church and the city are "great partners," she said.

"If not for the church, many great things in the city would not be possible," she said.